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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 429th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 29 June 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/59 OF 9 DECEMBER 1992 (continued)

1. Mr. ETEFFA (Ethiopia), after taking note of the favourable international climate and the positive developments conducive to the efforts to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, said that the members of the Ad Hoc Committee were relying on the current atmosphere of mutual understanding in international relations in carrying out their responsibilities to consider new alternative approaches and to address the complex ramifications of the issues involved, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/59.

2. The goals contained in the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and considered at the Meeting of the Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean remained valid, although they were open to review and revision. Some of those goals had already been accomplished; however, differing views remained as to the relevance of the goals and concepts contained in the Declaration. The concept of the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace had been developed to avert the external threat, including nuclear disaster. In that connection, two basic questions should be answered: whether the signs of external threat still existed, and/or whether the external threat should be confined to super-Power rivalry. An appropriate response to those two questions could convince those who had doubts regarding the relevance of the Committee's work.

3. Any efforts to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean must be focused on finding common ground acceptable to both the external Powers and the Indian Ocean States. That would require evidence of political will, flexibility and a willingness to compromise and to make concessions for the sake of achieving global security.

4. The Committee had been established 20 years earlier as a forum for negotiations aimed at reconciling divergent views, and it was still carrying out its initial task. The efforts to convene a United Nations Conference on the Indian Ocean in 1993 had failed, and other initiatives would meet the same fate if special attention was not given to ensuring the participation in the discussions, at an early stage, of all the permanent members of the Security Council, the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean and other members of the Committee. He expressed appreciation for the Chairman's efforts in that regard and for the fact that certain delegations were once again participating in the Committee's work so as to share their constructive views. It was to be hoped that other delegations which were currently absent would do the same, as the Committee had already started dealing with the various issues involved, using new approaches. One of those approaches might be that, even if the external threat had now diminished, the concept of the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace could serve as an example for the establishment of a possible global zone of peace within the framework of a new world order.

5. Mr. SREENIVASAN (India) recalled that, at the beginning of the Committee's current session, his delegation had made a comprehensive statement emphasizing that India agreed to take into account the new positive changes in international relations, and also that the Committee should again review its mandate with a view to determining its future. His delegation had noted that the question of the continuing relevance of certain aspects of the 1971 Declaration should be considered. In that connection, his delegation had stressed that the Committee was still playing an important role in addressing the complex ramifications of the issues involved and making recommendations to the General Assembly concerning new alternative approaches.

6. During the discussion, a proposal had been made to convene, as a first step, a meeting of the littoral and hinterland States. India was categorically opposed to the holding, under current circumstances, of such a meeting of the countries of the region without the participation of States which had a significant military or other presence in the Indian Ocean. Not only the countries of the region, but also the permanent members of the Security Council and the other major maritime users should take part in the discussion of the relevant issues. Any discussion should be aimed at the achievement of some kind of understanding with regard to the possible forms of cooperation among the countries of the region and external Powers, so that all States could assume specific responsibilities leading to the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean. A meeting at which only the countries of the region were represented, as in 1979, could hardly have any positive results. The Committee was the appropriate forum for further discussion of the issues involved. Its membership included not only the littoral and hinterland States, but also the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users, several of which were continuing to take part in the Committee's work.

7. Although all the members of the Committee concurred that the search for new approaches must continue, they were not yet really in agreement as to what those new approaches consisted of. That in itself was a task to be undertaken by the Committee. Accordingly, the Committee should continue its work in the following year with the participation of Powers having a significant military presence in the region, with a view to elaborating proposals which could be adopted by the General Assembly.

8. Mr. MORADI (Islamic Republic of Iran), wishing to expand on a statement which he had made at an earlier meeting of the Committee, said that the time had come to reconsider certain provisions of the 1971 Declaration in the light of new developments on the international scene. In view of the changed circumstances, it was difficult for the Committee to base its work on the Declaration, as currently drafted. Accordingly, his delegation had proposed that, as an alternative approach, the Committee should focus on reviewing and reconsidering that Declaration, with the help of a potentially broader number of participants.

9. In the view of the Iranian delegation, it would also be advisable for the Secretary-General to carry out a study of that issue, with the help of an independent body, which could put forth new ideas. His delegation assumed that the preparation of such a study was the responsibility of the Secretary-General, and that similar studies which the Secretary-General had carried out in the past

(Mr. Moradi, Islamic Republic of Iran)

had had a significant effect. He was convinced that the preparation of such a study would not have a negative impact on the process of work in the Committee.

10. The consideration of alternative approaches and the preparation of a study by the Secretary-General were mutually complementary types of activities. At the same time, the Islamic Republic of Iran did not see any point in convening another meeting of the Committee for the purpose of reiterating positions that were already well known.

11. With regard to the Committee's report for 1993, the conclusions and recommendations should reflect matters relating to the implementation of the mandate conferred on the Committee by the General Assembly in the previous year. If the Committee was unable to consider the matters before it, it should recommend to the General Assembly that they be considered in the future. If the Committee was not competent to consider all the issues involved, it should request the Secretary-General to carry out the appropriate study. Clear recommendations must also be made with regard to the Committee's future role. In addition, the report must give equal attention to all of the alternative approaches suggested during informal consultations, which should be considered at a later stage by all the members of the Committee. If a specific alternative approach was recommended which was unacceptable to the members of the Committee, it would also be unacceptable to those members of the Committee which were not participating in the current session.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.